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SCHOOLS IN IMPROVEMENT

Differentiated Accountability

Fact Sheet

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What are the expectations for schools?

The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires schools to meet annual targets in reading and mathematics. Students are tested annually in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school by the end-of-course High School Assessments in English and algebra/data analysis. Science is measured in grades 5 and 8 and by the Biology HSA; science is not part of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements. Results are reported for all students as a group and for the following subgroups: African American, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic, White, and those receiving special services (free and reduced price meals, Limited English Proficient, and special education). Schools are also expected to make progress in the Other Academic Indicator -- attendance for elementary and middle schools and graduation rate for high schools. Additionally, a minimum of 95% of a school's students must participate in assessments.

Schools meeting targets or Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for all students and subgroups make AYP. Those that do not meet targets for all students and subgroups do not make AYP and may be identified for Improvement.

What happens when a school misses a target the first time?

When a school misses an AMO target or does not have the required 95% participation in the assessments for the first time, it needs attention from the local school system to make sure the school meets all AMOs and the required participation rate in the future. It is not identified for School Improvement, but the school must complete a School Inventory to help evaluate its current status.

How do schools enter and progress in School Improvement?

In July 2008, MSDE received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to implement a Differentiated Accountability pilot to allow the state to distinguish between Schools in Improvement that need substantial help and those close to meeting achievement goals. Schools are placed in one of two pathways: Comprehensive Needs or Focused Needs. They are further identified according to stages as Developing or Priority based on the number of years the school has been identified for improvement.

- After not achieving a target (AMO or participation) in the same subject (reading, math or the other academic indicator) for two consecutive years, the school enters School Improvement in one of two pathways:
Comprehensive Needs: The school has not met the AMO in the "all students" subgroup or has not met the AMO for three or more subgroups.
Focused Needs: The school has not met the AMO for one or two subgroups or is a 100% special education subgroup school.

The first year that a School in Improvement meets all targets in the subject that caused it to be identified for School Improvement, it will remain at the same School Improvement level for the next year.

What is required of schools identified for School Improvement?

Year 1:

A school in year one of School Improvement must write a detailed plan to address student achievement problems.

Year 2:

For a school in year two of School Improvement that is in the federal Title I program for high poverty schools, the school system must offer parents the option of transferring their child to a higher achieving school in the school system (School Choice) and must provide the additional option of extra tutoring services (Supplemental Educational Services or SES) to students who are economically disadvantaged. Title I schools must continue to offer these options if they remain in improvement.

Year 3:

Schools beginning their third consecutive year in Comprehensive Needs without making AYP will have to implement at least one NCLB-approved corrective action and incorporate the action into the school improvement plan. Schools in their third year in Focused Needs are required to accelerate work on issues related to the subgroups and subjects failed and *may* have to implement an NCLB-approved corrective action.

Year 4:

Schools in their fourth consecutive year in either pathway must choose an alternative governance model with approval of the State Board of Education and make plans to implement the model in year five if the school continues to not make AYP. This could include replacing all or most of the staff, including the principal, contracting with a private management company, or re-opening as a charter school.

Year 5:

A school in year five must implement the alternative governance plan approved by the State Board of Education. Schools serving 100% special education populations must implement intervention options.

Schools Continuing in Improvement After Year 5:

Priority Focused Needs schools unable to exit their status after year seven will be transitioned to Comprehensive Needs status and must fulfill the requirements of that category. Schools in their tenth year of School Improvement who have been unable to exit will be subject to an MSDE audit to determine the specific causes of their inability to achieve standards. The audit results will be used to determine the next steps for MSDE and the local school system.

Will parents be notified?

Each local school system is responsible for notifying the parents of each child enrolled in a school identified for School Improvement. The notice must include an explanation of what the identification means, the reasons for the identification, what the school is doing to address the problems, and how parents can help.

How can a school exit School Improvement status?

The first year the school makes AYP, it enters a holding pattern. It does not move to the next step in the process, but it does not exit the program. During this year, the school must continue to offer the services or implement the changes mandated before it made AYP. If a school makes AYP the next year (a second consecutive year), it exits the improvement program. If, after exiting the improvement program, the school fails to make AYP for two consecutive years, it re-enters the improvement program at the beginning (School Improvement Year 1).